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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN KIUL RIVER VALLEY (FROM EARLIEST TO TWELVE CENTURY C.E.)

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INTRODUCTION:

In the early medieval period, the present state of Bihar was divided into two prevalent administrative centers, known as Śrīnagara-bhukti and Tira-bhuktit. The former Śrīnagara-bhukti was comprised of three viṣayas, Gayā, Rājagriha and Kṛmilā respectively. The name Kṛmilā among these visaya got its origin from the nearby river Kṛmikalā which is not other than the river Kiul of present Bihar. The early reference to this river is mentioned in Buddhist texts, Aṅguttara Nikayā and Moghyevagga in which this river is called as Kṛmikalā . Kiul is one of the most important rivers of southern Bihar .It originates from the Ghoranji mountain of Dehuri block in Giridih district of Jharkhand. After a short distance it enters Jamui district where near Rajagumar mountain of Chakai block the river become prominent and, passes near the town of Jamui. Two miles south of Jamui it is joined by Barnar, below this point it receives the Alai, a mountain stream and near Jamui railway station it is joined by the Anjan and flows towards Lakhisarai .Near Rahuaghat, it is joined by the Harohar, a continuation of the Sakri River. After this it falls into the Ganges near Surajgarha .

Historically the entire flood plain of Kiul river is very significant for the Indian subcontinent .The area of lower Kiul basin was on the confluence of the three important ancient cultural zones of Aṅga, Magadh and Mithīlā, and had a very crucial role in the political, administrative as well as in socio-religious system of the time. The famous Chinese traveler Xuan Zang visited this area in the 6th century C.E. Evidences shows that the illustrious city Kṛmilā of Buddhist and Brahmanical texts was situated on this lower Kiul basin area .We have also several epigraphic references which mentions this area, especially about the Kṛmilā viṣaya. In this regard, Nālandā plate of

Samudragupta, Bihar inscription of Gupta period and Naulāgaṛh inscription are very important. Pala king, Devapala's Muṅger copper plate inscription, of the later period, has also mentioned this region as an important administrative center .The art -architectural and sculptural work , mainly associated with the belief of Hindu and Buddhist religion , is scattered extensively to this region; also indicate the great religious importance of this region, in its cotemporary period. The upper Kiul basin specifically the portion within the present Jamui district , on the other hand, is also important for historical event of the subcontinent .This area is very important for the Jain sects .According to a traditional belief of Jainism Jambhiyagram on the bank of river Ujjihuvaliya should be identified with present Jamui ,a legendary place of Jain religion .

Therefore evidences shows that, Kiul flood plain region certainly has a long flourishing history of human settlement .The existing material remains in the form of several massive brick structural mound ;large number of stone sculptures associated with Brhamanical ,Buddhist and Jain religion ;and huge amount of different types of pot shards and other relevant cultural materials on the area suggesting that this region had crucial role to play as an eminent religio-administrative centre in ancient and early medieval period. Even many sites of the region like Balgudar ,Rajaona ,Lai , Indpegarh ,Naulakhagara , ,Simariya, Bikrampur ,Uren etc where multi cultural layers is clear . Hence the archaeological record which is dotted along the river flood plain needs to be studied properly to reconstruct the history of the flood plain area.

AREA OF STUDY:

The present research work will cover the entire flood plain region of river Kiul, an important tributary of Ganga in southern Bihar .After originating in present Jharkhand state, Kiul has crossed Jamui and Lakhisarai district of southern Bihar and before the falls into the Ganga . This river is joined by another river Harohar at Rahuaghat, a continuation of the Sakri River and finally falls into the Ganga near Surajgarha .The geographical location of this region is very crucial from strategic and economic point of view as well as a node of political domination .The Ganga valley region which is always considered an important area for political dominion and active trade network in the subcontinent .River Kiul has connected south-east region of Bihar and its surrounding area with this Ganga valley region .Through the river Ganga this area was well connected with Pātalīputṛa , Vārānasi , Muṅger, Champā and Tāmralipti etc. some very important center of ancient India . The river Haruhar links this region with early historical centers like Nālandā, Rājgir, Bodh-Gayā in south.

Hence certainly this region had the parallel development with the historical event of the subcontinent and the numbers of archaeological site reported from the flood plain region also advocating about this fact. Therefore the plethora of archaeological data scattered in the region denotes the long and rich cultural heritage of the flood plain seeking some scientific study to uncover the history of the region and also for the holistic understanding of historical event in the lower Ganga valley region.

EARLIER WORK:

The study of this region with long history of human settlement has always been considered as a very rich and potential zone for historical and archaeological investigations. In the late 19th century, this region was able to draw the attention of British administrative scholars like Beglar (surveyed the whole area in 1871–72); Buchanan and Cunningham (surveyed the area first in 1871 and later in 1879–80). Cunningham, also known for his interest in Buddhist remains, linked this region with the Pre-Mauryan period .However with the great efforts of all of these antiquarians cum historians, stupas and temples have been identified in this area. According to Cunningham's report, a large town or city existed here at the confluence of river Kiul, old Ganges and Haruhar. It extended from Rajaona southwards up to Jainagar along the western bank of river Kiul . After these European scholars many Indian scholars also devoted themselves to uncover the history of this region. D.C.Sirkar, one of the great epigraphists, deciphered an inscription from Balgudar and opined that Balgudar was the centre of Kṛmilā viṣaya .B.K. Jamuar who explored Chowki and the adjacent village Rajaona gave a vivid description of the sculptures recovered from these two villages. Later on the regional variation in style of sculptors, of this region, has been even acknowledged by Frederick M. Asher and S. Huntington .D.K. Chakrabarty also explored this region, with specific reference to three villages - Balgudar, Rajaona and Chowki. Beside these Anil Kumar and Claudine Bautze-Picron has also investigated this region with different aspects of historical and archaeological evidences .However due to the presence of ample evidences of archaeological remains this region has always been considered as a potential zone of academic investigation for many art historians, epigraphists and archaeologists.

The foremost previous work conducted on historical investigation in Kiul river valley was largely restricted to the lower portion of the valley .Only Buchanan has explored this region in nineteenths century. On the other hand most of the earlier work carried out in this area is based on the study of art and sculpture and to some extent on epigraphy but very limited work has been done to understand the earlier settlement pattern of the region. However previous research revealed many archaeological sites in this region .The following are the important sites in this region : Paisara ,Indpegarh ,Naulakhagara ,Mahadeva at Gridheswar mountain , Nongarh, Rampur ,Garhi ,Bridavan ,Ghosi-Kundi , Bichwe ,Neri ,Kiul ,Hasanpur , Jainagar , Jalappa Sthan ,Ramsir , Arma, Pokhrama, Uren, Balgudar ,Chowki ,Rajaouna ,Lagma ,Sonpai,Navinagar ,Simariya Bikrampur ,Amrai ,Dholajor etc . Most of these sites are located in lower Kiul basin and the upper Kiul basin represent so far totally as an unexplored area. Hence the present study will not only bring into light a number of archaeological sites, not reported in previous researches, from upper as well as lower Kiul basin, but also will deal with the reconstruction of historical importance of all these sites in a systematic manner.

Though this region has a long history of historical and archaeological investigation by several scholars, yet there are certain problems to understand the archaeological sites of this region in a holistic way. Some reason behind it as follows:

- So far no attempt has also been taken to study archaeological site in its proper geographical landscape and context which will throw light on the paleo-landscape as well as the formation and preservation of the material record.

- There has also been very limited study undertaken to understand the settlement pattern which is a very important aspect to understand a region.

- Holistic understanding of a site, such as its origin, development, locational criteria, man land relationship and relation with other sites is not available in previous research.

- This area, in the early medieval period, gains the extensive glory for its sculpture and iconographic work, made of black basalt stone. But so far very limited study has been done on the origin, development and marketing of these sculptures.

- Ceramic is one of the most important markers in understanding an archaeological site .But very limited study of ceramics has been done on this region mainly due to the lack of any systematic excavation of a site. Due to this no chronological sequence of the ceramics has been established to this area.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The overall objective of this research work is to study and document the nature and characteristics of the archaeological settlement pattern of Kiul flood plain region, through the following specific objectives:

- To study the geomorphology of the Kiul flood plain region to get a proper understanding of the nature, formation and distribution of archaeological record on the present landscape.

- To study the nature of sites-their location pattern, i.e., whether (i) located on the active flood plain (ii) Away from the river (iii) Attached to the hilly region or not etc.

- To establish the co-relation between settlement pattern and natural resources, as this is the most predominant factor for human settlement.

- To show how the different sites of the area are connected with each other

- To understand inter-site variabilities within the region through comparing sculpture and other documented artifactual assemblages of the surface explored sites with the excavated ones and accessible museums reserved collections.

- An attempt will be made to understand the ceramic and other material of the sites to reconstruct site activities, cultural contact and probable economic character of the people.

- To establish the proper phases and arrange a general chronology of the cultural materials of the sites.

- To highlight the importance of the area in respect of culture, religion and administrative strategic centers of the contemporary period.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

- To go through this research work field work is an important aspect .But before the initiation of this field work, to make an assessment of archaeological potentiality of the region, background research will be conducted based on the review and evaluation of archaeological and historical literature relevant to the proposed area.

- Village to village intensive pedestrian survey and systematic exploration, of the Kiul flood plain region, will be done with the help of toposheets and GPS technology to accurately plot site locations. .

- It is very essential to understand the local geography and geomorphology for this study and efforts will be made to understand the present landscape through consultation with geologists working on this terrain and referring to soil reports of Geological Survey of India.

- Use of satellite imagery will also be utilized to check the changing fluvial regime of the river with its various changing features and the context of the sites in the present landscape development .It should be helpful to understand the locational criteria of the sites .It should also be helpful to understand how the sites are distributed in the present landscape.

- One of the major sources for this study should be systematic surface exploration to understand the assemblage in its proper context .Here the researcher needs to carry out comparative study of the cultural material accessible in different museums and institutes.

- To know about the connectivity among the sites the researcher should proceed with the view that the central settlement should be significantly larger than the other settlements and other settlement would cluster around the centre .The relationship between the centre and the satellite settlement should be stronger than the relationship between the satellite settlements themselves as the central settlement should be in core area the political, economic, cultural and religious system,

  Some natural resources (like black stone) are accessible from some sites of this area but sculptures made of black stone has been found from the outside of this region like Nalanda and Vikramshila etc .This things should help the researcher not only to understand the connectivity among the sites but also outside the region.

- As ceramics provide very crucial information about a site, it needs to be analyzed with a specific methodology and approach .On this ground ceramics should be classified systematically on technological, formal, stylistic and functional grounds.

- To reconstruct the historical importance of the area a comparative study will be done with other areas of contemporary period to highlight the historical importance of the region. Attention should also be given to the statistical analysis of archaeological sites and archaeological data. Here the archaeological materials will be compared with the other regions of contemporary period, such as the ratio of urban center and village settlement, size of the sites (both urban and village settlements), number of trading centers and probable major connected routes etc.

- Attention should also be given to the analysis of existing contemporary literature as well as the selective colonial accounts which has some historical narratives about the region. There are many inscriptions discovered from this region ,some of which are official inscriptions .Hence an attempt should be made with the corroboration of epigaraphic and literary evidences along with archaeological material to reconstruct the history of the region.

CHAPTERISATION

INTRODUCTION

In the introductory chapter of the thesis, an account of the study area, specifically geo-cultural features and history of the region, should be briefly discussed. As well as a short description about the previous research conducted in this area; critic of the previous work; aim and objective of the present research and adopted methodology of the present research work will also be explained clearly in this chapter.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: THE PREDOMINANT FACTOR BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

Various environmental factor as well as topographical aspect of the study area will be discussed in this chapter.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: NATURE AND DISTRIBUTION IN THE PRESENT LAND SCAPE

This chapter will clarify the concept of sites and the categories of sites available in the study area and will also deal with the distributional pattern and existence of the sites in the landscape which provides the initial background to develop a site pattern in the study area.

STUDY OF CERAMIC: AN IMPORTANT ASPECT TO UNDERSTAND THE EVOLUTION OF SETTLEMENT

In this chapter a detailed analysis of ceramic tradition found in this area will be discussed .The chapter will start with a site wise description of pottery and followed by this the development of pottery tradition of this area , from earliest to the twelve century A.D., also be discussed in the end of this chapter.

UNDERSTANDING SETTLEMENT SYSTEM: THE STUDY OF LOCATION PATTERN AND CONNECTIVITY

This chapter will deal with a view to define the relation between the natural resources and development of sites .Beside this the connectivity among the sites as well as the connectivity of the study area with contemporary other region will be discussed .

STUDY OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THE SETTLEMENTS: BASED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES

In this chapter an assessment will be present on political and economic activity of the area based on epigraphic, sculptural, ceramic and other available archaeological evidences.

CONCLUSION

In the concluding part of the thesis a brief summary on the outcome of the research will be presented .On the other hand the importance of the archaeological evidences recorded through this study will be highlighted for a holistic understanding the history of the region.

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